

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

January 4, 2005

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss  
Chairman  
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Chambliss and Ranking Member Harkin:

I write to request the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee convene a hearing to review the proposed final rule published by USDA in the Federal Register on January 4, 2005, concerning the establishment of a Minimal-Risk Region designation for Canadian live cattle and other animal and meat product imports. Because the effective implementation date of the USDA rule is March 7, 2005, it is imperative the Committee address these issues prior to that time.

The USDA decision to propose a final rule that will re-open our border for livestock trade with Canada and the recent confirmation that another Canadian cow has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) require that we fully review these issues.

Furthermore, Canada has proposed significant modifications to its regulations governing livestock feed that will become effective in February of this year. At the same time, there are numerous reports of ineffective enforcement and compliance in Canada with its existing livestock feed production and consumption rules. These reports include a large number of U.S. Food and Drug Administration import alerts concerning contaminated feed produced by Canadian feed companies.

These issues raise additional questions concerning Canada's eligibility for Minimal-Risk Region status and the potential that USDA has failed to adhere to international animal health standards and protocols. These and other questions should be answered before we accept the potential risks associated with allowing greater U.S. market access for cattle, sheep and other bovine and bovine product imports from Canada.

I encourage you to request that the Secretary of Agriculture and other appropriate USDA officials to appear before the Committee to explain the proposed rule and respond to questions pertaining

to this action as well as other related issues from a scientific standpoint as well as from an economic, market and trade point of view.

In addition, since the proposed final rule does not allow for full public participation in the regulatory process, I believe it is also important that other interested parties have the opportunity to express their views concerning these topics and also respond to questions from the Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to working with each of you to ensure the Committee's responsibilities are met and these serious concerns addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Conrad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

KENT CONRAD  
United States Senate